

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 241140Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7025

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 15354

STADIS//////////

FOR ASST SECY HABIB FROM AMB KINTNER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MPOL, TH
SUBJ: THAI DEFENSE MINISTER'S REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL AID

REF: A. STATE 208591 B. BANGKOK 14721

1. I APPRECIATE THE CLOSE ATTENTION WITH WHICH YOU READ REF (B) DESCRIBING MY CONVERSATION WITH DEFENSE MINISTER KHRUAN. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT HE PRESENTED NO NEW ARGUMENTS, THIS WAS MY FIRST SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION WITH HIM AND HE WANTED ME TO HAVE THE FULL FLAVOR OF HIS VIEWS, WHICH IF NOT NEW, ARE STRONGLY HELD AND WIDELY SHARED WITHIN THE THAI MILITARY.

2. WE ARE FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE BLEAK OUTLOOK FOR US SECURITY ASSISTANCE, IN THAILAND AS WELL AS WORLDWIDE. WE ARE DOING NOTHING TO ENCOURAGE THAI EXPECTATIONS, AND THE THAI THEMSELVES ARE GRADUALLY ADJUSTING TO THE SITUATION. THIS, OF COURSE, WILL NOT PREVENT THEIR CONTINUING TO ASK US FOR MORE, OR FROM FEELING DISMAY IN THE FACE OF THE CONTINUED DECLINE THAT IS CLEARLY IN THE CARDS. THE THAI MILITARY ARE, HOWEVER, FACING A PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT SITUATION OF THEIR OWN AT THIS TIME OWING TO THE BUDGETARY PRIORITIES OF THE INTERIM CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT, AND KHRUAN'S SPECIAL PLEA IS BASED AT LEAST IN PART ON THAT PROBLEM.

3. WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THE THAI TOWARD A REALISTIC
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VIEW OF THE FUTURE OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND URGE THEM TO

ADJUST TO IT. WE MUST, HOWEVER, TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE FACT THAT THIS ADJUSTMENT WILL INCLUDE AN INCREASING DISINCLINATION ON THEIR PART TO ACCOMMODATE OUR REQUIREMENTS HERE, SINCE THEY HAVE TENDED TO EQUATE OUR INTEREST IN THEIR SECURITY WITH OUR PROGRAMS OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THEM.

4. IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE OV-10 QUESTION SHOULD BE EXAMINED. AS MAP LEVELS DECLINE WE WILL HAVE TO FIND ALTERNATIVE NORMS OF ASSISTANCE IF WE PROPOSE TO CONTINUE EFFECTIVE US OPERATIONS IN THAILAND. RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, THE THAI BELIEVED AFTER SECRETARY CLEMENT'S VISIT HERE LAST YEAR THAT THEY WOULD RECEIVE OV-10'S, OF WHICH THREE US SQUADRONS REMAIN IN-COUNTRY. I AM NOT CONVINCED THAT WE WOULD BEST SERVE US INTERESTS AT THIS POINT BY TELLING THEM THAT THE OV-10 ISSUE IS DEAD. INSTEAD, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD LEAVE AT LEAST ONE SQUADRON OF OV-10'S IN THAILAND UNTIL THE FAR END OF THE DRAWDOWN; WE SHOULD TELL THE THAI THAT THEIR REQUEST CANNOT BE MET AT THIS TIME Owing TO USAF WORLDWIDE REQUIREMENTS BUT THAT IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT OF A CHANGE IN US REQUIREMENTS, WE WILL HAVE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE THAI REQUEST. WHILE THIS APPROACH WILL ADMITTEDLY NOT COMPLETELY CLOSE THE DOOR ON THAI EXPECTATIONS, IT IS FAR FROM A COMMITMENT AND WOULD GIVE US A CHANCE TO REVIEW THE SITUATION LATER WITHOUT PREJUDICE. I WOULD NOT REGARD THIS LINE OF APPROACH AS DISINGENUOUS, SINCE I BELIEVE THAT THE OV-10 AIRCRAFT IS HIGHLY SUITABLE TO THAILAND, AND I HOPE THAT THOSE DEALING WITH THESE MATTERS IN WASHINGTON WILL EVENTUALLY COME AROUND TO THAT VIEW. IF NOT, THEN I WOULD WELCOME WASHINGTON'S SUGGESTIONS AS TO WHAT OTHER APPROPRIATE EXCESS DEFENSE ARTICLES MIGHT BE MADE AVAILABLE IN AN EFFORT TO MAINTAIN THAI COOPERATION AS GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE DECLINES.

5. REGARDING THE "JOINT ASSESSMENT" OF THE INSURGENCY, IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE BEGINNING, OF COURSE, THAT BOTH KHRUAN AND KRIANGSAK WOULD ATTEMPT TO USE THIS TO JUSTIFY ADDITIONAL MILITARY AID. KRIANGSAK DID, HOWEVER, DURING MY MEETING WITH THE DEFENSE MINISTER SUGGEST THAT ISOC PARTICIPATE IN THE ASSESSMENT, AND BOTH KHRUAN AND I AGREED. KRIANGSAK AND THE DCM MET SEPTEMBER 19 TO INITIATE THE DISCUSSIONS PROPOSED BY KHRUAN. AT THIS POINT IT BECAME APPARENT THAT SUPREME

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COMMAND HAD SHIFTED ITS POSITION AND WOULD NOT INCLUDE ISOC AND THAT ANY "ASSESSMENT" DONE ON THE THAI SIDE BY SUPREME COMMAND WOULD BE SUPERFICIAL. THE DCM STRESSED THAT HIS EXERCISE COULD NOT BE USED AS A GIMMICK TO GET ADDITIONAL MAP, THAT IT WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL TO GIVE US A SHOPPING LIST, AND THAT AN INCREASE IN MILITARY AID THIS YEAR WAS NOT IN THE CARDS. THE MOST WE COULD ACHIEVE THROUGH A REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF THE INSURGENCY WAS TO FIND WAYS TO

USE THE AVAILABLE FUNDS MORE EFFECTIVELY. COMUSMACTHAI HAS ALSO COVERED THE SAME GROUND WITH KRIANGSAK.

6. WHEN I SAW GENERAL KRIT SIWARA ON SEPTEMBER 23, HE ALSO MADE A STRONG PITCH FOR A CONTINUED HIGH LEVEL OF MILITARY AID. I USED THE OCCASION TO EXPLAIN TO KRIT, AS I HAVE TO OTHER KEY THAI LEADERS, THAT OUR MAP CUPBOARD IS NEARLY BARE, THAT WE HAVE SERIOUS TROUBLES SUCH AS INFLATION AT HOME WHICH REQUIRE URGENT ATTENTION, AND THAT THERE IS A DESPERATE NEED FOR MILITARY AID TO VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA WHICH CONTRIBUTES TO THAILAND'S SECURITY. I STRESSED THE FACT THAT, WHILE WE WOULD DO OUR BEST, WE COULD NOT EVEN PROMISE TO MAINTAIN MILITARY AID AT CURRENT LEVELS. AS A RESULT I TOLD KRIT WE WILL NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO FIND OTHER WAYS IN WHICH THAILAND CAN MEET ITS ESSENTIAL NEEDS (THIS IS SPELLED OUT IN GREATER DETAIL IN A SEPARATE REPORTING TELEGRAM).

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